

## Cultural Landscapes



Yellowstone is best known for its world-class array of geothermal features and a display of native wildlife that is nearly unparalleled in North America. But the landscape itself, backdrop for countless images seen through camera lenses and human eyes, should not be overlooked as a special resource. In addition to providing for the preservation of historic

structures, the National Historic Preservation Act also recognizes the significance of such “cultural landscapes.”

In the broadest sense, cultural landscapes reflect human adaptation and use of natural resources, as expressed in land use patterns, circulation systems, and the types of structures that are built. Geographic areas associated with historic events, activities, or persons, or that exhibit other cultural or aesthetic values—such as Yellowstone’s primary road system with its structures and bridges—may be considered as cultural landscapes. The historic Buffalo Ranch in the Lamar Valley is treated as one of these unique resources, and other potential cultural landscapes include some of the park’s designed trails and the historic districts at Fort Yellowstone/Mammoth Hot Springs, Old Faithful, and Fishing Bridge.

### KEEPING THE BALANCE

Preservation guidelines recognize that change, whether a result of human activities or natural processes, is inherent in cultural landscapes. A balance must be maintained between retention of a cultural landscape’s distinctive characteristics and the inevitability of a river’s meandering, a plant community’s successional growth, or a mountain’s natural erosion. Management of a cultural landscape focuses on preserving a landscape’s physical attributes, biotic systems, and human use when that use contributes to its historic significance. In some instances, it may be appropriate to rehabilitate or restore these unique resources.

## DOCUMENTING HISTORY

Management of the park's cultural landscapes, done jointly by staff from the Yellowstone Center for Resources and the park's Maintenance Division, is hampered by the lack of surveys of the landscape and features or elements that contribute to Yellowstone's historic character. Research and evaluation of the landscapes' defining features and their integrity are a prelude to development of a strategy to maintain or restore these cultural resources. Historic Resource Studies of the park's road systems and the park administration are providing information and context by which to evaluate the park's landscapes.



Once the potentially significant landscapes are identified, trained staff are required to evaluate the effects of change or disturbance to structures and scenes. Several staff specialists spend a portion of their time ensuring that the park complies with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other laws that guide cultural resource preservation.

### *Program Needs*

- **INVENTORIES AND MANAGEMENT.** Basic research and analysis of potentially significant cultural landscapes are needed so that landscape architects and other trained staff can prepare an inventory that documents existing conditions and evaluates the significance of the landscapes. The park will consult with affiliated American Indian tribes with regard to ethnographic landscapes, and recommend additional studies and management actions to preserve landscape values. Staff must also prepare a cultural landscape preservation plan that prescribes area-specific strategies for landscape treatment and ongoing maintenance.

- **IMPROVED COMPLIANCE.** To ensure that landscapes and their component structures and objects are not inadvertently altered or destroyed, additional staff training and attention are needed to familiarize park rangers, maintenance workers, and others with cultural resource laws and values. Recent attempts to streamline regulatory procedures and analysis need to continue, and cultural resource values must be shared with staff and visitors.

## IN THE SHADE OF THE OLD COTTONWOOD TREE

When the First U.S. Cavalry rode into Yellowstone in 1886, they set up a hasty camp, later named Camp Sheridan, at the foot of the Mammoth Hot Springs and began to impose law and order on an unruly landscape. Once the long-term nature of the Army's stay became clear, soldiers also set about constructing their new headquarters, Fort Yellowstone, around existing wagon roads, buildings, and the natural topography.

Although considered preferable to an assignment on the dusty plains, Fort Yellowstone was built on a flat expanse of travertine that supported a few small conifers, short grass, and sagebrush. The first post station and quarters were built in 1891, but the tall trees that line Officers' Row—cottonwoods native to the park but not to the limestone flats lining the Army's parade grounds—were not planted until 1926, probably to provide shade from the summer heat, as well as for aesthetic reasons. Park headquarters is still at Mammoth Hot Springs,



and the area surrounding the old fort is a historic district. The development is similar to that which existed between 1891 and 1913, and an excellent example of a landscape adapted to accommodate human use and traffic patterns for tourism, commerce, and military functions.

As the twentieth century wore on, the cottonwoods began succumbing to the effects of age, a dry/harsh climate, and tree pests. To maintain this element of the historic landscape, cuttings were taken in 1986 and have been used to replace failing trees in the district.

In 1997, interpretive exhibits were installed under the shade of Officers' Row and along adjacent portions of the historic Army command post to guide walking visitors through this path in Yellowstone's history.



## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

### STEWARDSHIP GOALS



Cultural resource managers and other park staff share an appreciation and responsibility for preserving resources as outlined in law and policy.



Professional staff oversee an interdisciplinary program of cultural landscape preservation and maintenance.



Cultural landscapes are evaluated under National Register criteria, and their values are preserved and interpreted to the public.



Partners and cooperators share responsibility for managing historic landscapes associated with facilities used for visitor services.

### CURRENT STATE OF RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



Specialists spend significant time evaluating other park construction and rehabilitation projects; the lack of broad knowledge and limited staff cause delays in cultural resource compliance.



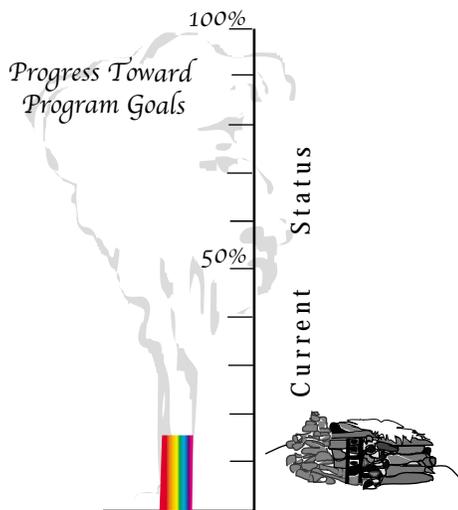
Three professional staff spend some time on this program, but little funding has been available to evaluate and preserve cultural landscapes even in primary visitor use areas such as the Old Faithful and Fort Yellowstone historic districts.



Historic Resource Studies have been contracted to provide basic information needed to preserve and interpret cultural landscapes.



Park staff have formed limited working partnerships with concessioners, affiliated American Indian Tribes, and others to build a program of cultural landscape preservation.



### 1998 FUNDING AND STAFF

Recurring Funds	
Yellowstone N.P. Base Budget	\$ 52,400
Staff	1.1 FTE

The human resources and funding necessary to professionally and effectively manage the park to stewardship levels will be identified in the park business plan.